

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of State

TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-14

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 HA-05
AID-05 ACDA-12 CIAE-03 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-08
COHE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /081 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3583

BUENOS AIRES 9280

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS MASS SHUM AR

SUBJECT AMBASSADOR CASTRO'S MEETING WITH GENERAL VIOLA

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR CASTRO MET WITH ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF VIOLA AND DISCUSSED HUMAN RIGHTS INCLUDING THE TIMERMAN CASE AND THE RIGHT OF OPTION PROGRAM, IMPACT OF U.S. RESTRICTIONS ON MILITARY SALES AND TRAINING, AND THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL VIOLA AND PRESIDENT VIDELA.

2. AMBASSADOR CASTRO, ACCOMPANIED BY DATT/ARMA (COL PAUL A. COUGHLIN), MET WITH ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF MAJOR GENERAL ROBERTO VIOLA IN THE ARMY HEADQUARTERS ON 5 DECEMBER. THE MEETING LASTED HALF AN HOUR.

3. EARLY IN THE CONVERSATION GENERAL VIOLA VOLUNTEERED THAT THE DENIAL OF FOREIGN MILITARY SALES AND CREDITS AND THE DISCONTINUANCE OF THE GRANT MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM WOULD HAVE VERY LITTLE IMPACT ON THE GOA, ALTHOUGH THE UNAVAILABILITY OF SPARE PARTS PRESENTED A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY IN THE NAVY AND AIR FORCE. HE THEN ADDED THAT THE ONE THING THAT WOULD SURELY ALIENATE THE ARGENTINE ARMY WOULD BE TO CLOSE THE DOOR ON THE PURCHASE OF THOSE TRAINING COURSES IN THE U. S. WHICH THE ARMY FEELS THAT IT NEEDS.

4. IN RESPONSE TO AN INQUIRY BY AMBASSADOR CASTRO, CONCERNING THE TIMERMAN CASE, GENERAL VIOLA ADMITTED THAT THE GOA WAS FACED WITH A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION. HE RECALLED THAT WHEN TIMERMAN WAS FIRST ARRESTED HE HAD ADVISED PRESIDENT VIDELA THAT THE CASE WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO HANDLE AND COULD BE EMBARRASSING FOR THE GOVERNMENT. HE INDICATED THAT SINCE THERE WERE NO CHARGES AGAINST TIMERMAN WHICH COULD BE TRIED IN A MILITARY COURT, HIS CASE WOULD BE TRIED IN A CIVIL COURT. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT THERE WAS STILL DOUBT AS TO THE ADEQUACY OF EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT A CONVICTION. DURING THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION THE GENERAL INSISTED THAT ANTI-SEMITISM IS NO MORE PREVALENT IN ARGENTINA THAN IN ANY OTHER COUNTRY.

5. WHEN AMBASSADOR CASTRO ASKED ABOUT THE RIGHT OF OPTION PROGRAM, GENERAL VIOLA PREDICTED THAT THERE WOULD BE IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS BEFORE CHRISTMAS WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE RELEASE OF A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM DETENTION.

6. TOWARD THE END OF THE MEETING, GENERAL VIOLA EMPHASIZED HIS EXTREMELY CLOSE AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA. HE STRESSED THAT NOT ONLY WAS HIS DOOR OPEN TO THE AMBASSADOR AT ANY TIME, BUT THAT HE HAD DIRECT AND RAPID ACCESS TO THE PRESIDENT AND HE INVITED AMBASSADOR CASTRO TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT CHANNEL WHENEVER HE FELT IT NECESSARY.

7. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: GENERAL VIOLA'S ENCOURAGING PREDICTION OF THE RELEASE OF A LARGE NUMBER OF DETAINEES BY CHRISTMAS WAS CONSISTENT WITH WHAT I HAD JUST HEARD FROM THE INTERIOR MINISTER A FEW MINUTES EARLIER. ALSO, VIOLA'S COMMENTS ON JACOBO TIMERMAN REFLECT A DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO ARGENTINA'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE THAT THE CASE BE RESOLVED SOON. THE CALL ON VIOLA WAS SCHEDULED AFTER

RECEIVING INFORMATION INFORMALLY THAT THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF WAS VERY ANXIOUS TO MEET WITH ME. LOOKING BACK ON THE MEETING, IT APPEARS THAT HIS MAIN OBJECTIVE WAS TO IMPRESS UPON ME THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WHICH HE ENJOYS WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA AND TO OFFER HIMSELF AS A CONDUIT TO THE PRESIDENT. THIS CHANNEL WILL BE USEFUL FOR EXPRESSING MANY OF OUR CONCERNS. BEGINNING OF COURSE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS.

CASTRO

AL 229

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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